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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000595

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BA](#) [IR](#) [OFFICIALS](#) [REGION](#) [CTR](#)

SUBJECT: U/S JOSEPH DISCUSSES IRAN AND PSI WITH BAHRAIN FM

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Foreign Minister Shaikh Khaled Bin Ahmed Al Khalifa told Arms Control and International Security U/S Robert Joseph April 8 that the GOB shares U.S. concerns about Iran's export of terrorism and development of nuclear weapons. He gave strong indications that Bahrain would support the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Although he expressed the need to notify Bahrain's leadership and neighbors before giving official support to the PSI, he said the GOB would move forward with or without others in the GCC and would make all efforts to convince them to take this step together. He also pledged Bahrain's support in cracking down on Iranian banks or front companies suspected to be involved in illicit activities. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Meeting with Foreign Minister Shaikh Khaled, U/S Joseph conveyed U.S. concern over Iran's continuing -- indeed, accelerating -- nuclear program. Progress in that program is notable ever since January; it is clear they have "both feet on the accelerator" on their nuclear weapons program. This is a direct threat to U.S. interests and to those of our friends and allies. While the United States clearly seeks an acceptable diplomatic solution to this growing threat, U/S Joseph reiterated the need to move forward with a broad range of "defensive measures": denial and interdiction efforts such as the PSI, measures to counter WMD financing and the growing use of front companies to covertly advance WMD-related activities; counter-proliferation planning, as well as combined exercises and training; and cooperation on other defense, dissuasion, and deterrence measures, such as passive and active defenses, together with appropriate declaratory policies. Pursuing such measures on a bilateral and, as appropriate, multilateral basis, will reinforce the prospects for diplomatic success and at the same time defend U.S. interests.

¶3. (C) Shaikh Khaled said that Bahrain is "really worried" about Iran. Bahrain is a true ally of the United States and shares the U.S. view of the threat Iran poses to the region and to the world. He observed that when he visited Tehran recently, Iranian officials continually repeated the mantra that their nuclear program is a "peaceful program that we have a right to pursue." Shaikh Khaled asked rhetorically why the Iranians would need to repeatedly say this if they were indeed merely talking about electricity production. In his view, Iran constituted a "clear and present threat." He went on to say, "We don't believe their program is peaceful." Shaikh Khaled mentioned that he would be meeting with Iranian Foreign Policy Chief and top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani April 9, who was on a tour of Gulf countries.

¶4. (C) Shaikh Khaled went on to say that Iran has concocted a deadly mixture of religion, terror and nuclear capability. It has accelerated the process of certifying clerics as

"ayatollahs" and is sending them out to neighboring countries in an effort to spread the revolution. He said, "The export of the Iranian revolution is the export of terror." Bahrain recognizes its responsibilities; it is not asking to be defended but as an ally is ready to work together on the front lines. He recognized the need for increased training of the Bahrain Defense Forces and expressed his appreciation for the U.S. concern for the region, U.S. help against Iranian aggression, and U.S. assistance to keep the Straits of Hormuz clear. In addition to Iran, he expressed GOB concern that Iraq be stabilized and that Hezbollah be dealt with, thereby leading to greater stability in Lebanon.

¶15. (C) When asked for Bahrain's commitment to the PSI, Shaikh Khaled said that the GOB will finalize its position as soon as its entire leadership is familiar with the issue. However, he assured U/S Joseph, "Whether other GCC countries move on the PSI or not, we will move ahead. But we need to notify our neighbors that we are taking this step. We will not wait, just as we did not wait with the FTA. And we will not spare any effort to convince other GCC countries that we all need to move forward in this way." He expressed his confidence that Kuwait would be receptive to U.S. PSI proposals, and specifically mentioned his intention to discuss the issue with Kuwaiti FM Shaikh Mohamed.

¶16. (C) Regarding the financial front in the battle against proliferation, Shaikh Khaled said that the GOB will close any Iranian bank or front company suspected to be involved in illicit activities benefiting Iran. He also said that Bahrain would apply U.N. sanctions against Iran completely if and when they are introduced.

¶17. (U) U/S Joseph has cleared this cable.

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